



Extreme Heat

WHAT IS THE PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM?

Exposure to excessive heat can cause illness, injury, and death. Approximately 400 people die each year from exposure to heat due to weather conditions, and many more people die from health conditions that are exacerbated by exposure to excess heat. Most heat-related deaths occur during the summer months. The elderly, the very young, and people with chronic health problems are most at risk. Air conditioning is the leading protective factor against heat-related illness and death. Heat-related illness and death can be prevented when people know who is at risk and what actions they can take to protect health.

WHAT HAS CDC ACCOMPLISHED?

To help protect public health, CDC:

- Provides information that can be used to prevent heat illness and death through publications, meetings, and an Extreme Heat Web site at <http://www.bt.cdc.gov/disasters/extremeheat/>.
- Conducts studies to identify risk factors for heat illness and death and populations at risk, and uses and disseminates that information to help prevent future illness and death.
- Publishes each year an update of heat-related mortality in the United States in CDC's *Mortality and Morbidity Weekly Report*.
- Works on guidelines to assist state and local health departments in their development of city-specific comprehensive heat emergency response plans.
- Collaborated on conducting and publishing an evaluation of heat emergency response plans for 12 cities, which states and cities can use to develop plans and strengthen existing plans (Bernard SM, McGeehin MA. Municipal heat waves and response plans. *American Journal of Public Health* 2004;94:1520-2).

WHAT ARE THE NEXT STEPS?

CDC will (1) continue to collaborate with national and international public health authorities to communicate the risks of extreme heat, (2) further evaluate current heat emergency response plans with emphasis on their ability to predict mortality and morbidity associated with specific climatologic factors and their public health effect, and (3) assume a leadership role in evaluating heat emergency response plans to identify plan components that can be adopted by city health departments.